



CALIFORNIA LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS



Volume IV, Edition I – January 2011

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New Latino Caucus Member Profile

ASSEMBLY MEMBER MICHAEL ALLEN



Michael Allen, sometimes referred to as “*Don Miguel*” by Members of the California Latino Legislative Caucus, may be new to Sacramento but is not new to advocating on behalf of his community. He has had an extensive career as a community leader in Santa Rosa that spans over 30 years, first as a psychiatric nurse, then as a labor leader and attorney, and most recently as District Director for former Senator Patricia Wiggins.

But to understand *Don Miguel*, you must learn his history. Michael was born and raised in Los Angeles by his Latina mother who immigrated to the U.S. upon marrying his father, a mining company attorney. Michael was only six years of age when he and his mother had to fend for themselves due to the unfortunate passing of his father.

Michael began his professional career as a psychiatric nurse for the Sonoma County Crisis Clinic in 1975. He soon thereafter attended law school and obtained his juris doctorate degree in 1979. After law school, he joined the Sierra Club Legal Team on the Warm Spring Dam initiative before finding

his calling as a negotiator, mediator, and consensus builder at the Sonoma County Organization of Public Employees.

In 1984, he became Executive Director of the Service Employees International Union Local 707, where he made notable accomplishments, including successfully establishing a childcare center and advocating for civil service reform. In 2007, he became the District Director for then Senator Wiggins, where he oversaw five regional offices that serve over 880,000 constituents in Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties.

Michael also has a long history of being a strong advocate of worker’s rights and the environment. As a labor attorney, he served as President of the North Bay Labor Council for nine terms. His service on the Santa Rosa Planning Commission, as Chair of the SMART Train Citizen Oversight Committee, and as a founding member of Solar Sonoma reflect his passion to create green jobs, improve sustainability, and protect and restore the environment.

Not long after being sworn into the Assembly, Michael was named to Speaker John Perez’ leadership team in the Assembly, as assistant majority floor leader. He was also selected to sit on five Assembly committees, including the committees on budget, business and professions, labor and employment, public employees and legislative ethics.

Don Miguel is the proud father of five children whom he raised in Santa Rosa, and all have gone on to achieve successful careers themselves.

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Welcome
Luncheon
(December 5, 2010)



A LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN MENDOZA

Good afternoon friends,

I hope you enjoy the first Latino Caucus e-newsletter of 2011. The Latino Caucus e-newsletter will serve to keep you informed about the many efforts by Members of the Caucus to serve our community. We also hope to provide you a glimpse into the intricate world that we as Legislators maneuver every day, the problems we see at a local and state level, and a glimpse into the hope we see for California in the near future.

The 2011-2012 Latino Caucus is comprised of 23 Legislators, consisting of 15 Assemblymembers and 8 Senators. The Legislators come from all walks of life and represent both rural and urban areas. When you combine the promising young talent joining the Latino Caucus in the 8 incoming Legislators with the established leadership of the 15 returning Members, you are presented with a dynamic group that will fight to advocate for our Latino community.

We are humbled to have received enough voter support to be in a position to represent you in the Legislature. Our success at the polls was partly due to the large number of Latinos that made their voices heard in the November 2010 general elections, comprising 22% of the electorate in California. But our momentum must not stop there.

The Latino Caucus will continue advocating for more Latinos to be appointed to State Boards and Commissions, some of which have never had Latino representation. We have created a Latino Caucus Select Committee on Appointments, whose sole focus will be to submit recommendations to the Governor's office for appointments. If Latinos are not

appointed, it will not be because of a lack of qualified candidates we have in our State.

As our predecessors have said, we believe the Latino Caucus agenda is, in reality, an American agenda. We all want access to quality healthcare, a good education for our children, and the creation of jobs. As Chair of the Latino Caucus, I will work to achieve those goals, while representing the interests of the largest growing segment of our nation—the Latino population.

I look forward to continue to work on the issues that affect our community and being a voice for Latinos throughout California. A daunting task is before us, but I believe in our Latino Caucus Members, I believe in our State, and most importantly I believe in Democracy.

Respectfully,

TONY MENDOZA
Assemblymember, 56th District
Latino Caucus Chair



Assembly Member Tony Mendoza represents the communities of Artesia, Hawaiian Gardens, Cerritos, Buena Park, Norwalk, Santa Fe Springs, Lakewood, Los Nietos, South Whittier and Whittier.

"KEEP DREAMING"

Federal DREAM Act Fails to Pass in Congress

On Saturday, December 18, 2010, a big segment of our community was told to "Keep Dreaming." Although the House of Representatives passed the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, the U.S. Senate failed to gather the 60 necessary Yes votes to pass the measure, and it failed. Five Democrats voted against the bill, three Republicans voted in support, and other members were simply not present for the vote; the result, 55 No votes and 41 Yes votes. The vote proved heartbreaking to supporters of the DREAM Act and hundreds of thousands of "dreamers" who would have benefited from its passage.

The Dream Act, however, is not estranged to the Latino community. It has been reintroduced in the US Congress numerous times since its original

introduction and failure in 2001. In California, Assemblymember Gilbert Cedillo (D-Los Angeles), Latino Caucus Chair Emeritus, has re-introduced a California version of the DREAM Act (AB 130 and AB 131) that would allow undocumented California students access to financial aid for higher education. His previous attempts at this law passed both the state Senate and Assembly, but were vetoed three times by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. However, with the added attention brought on by the push in Congress to pass the DREAM Act, the amounts of prominent undocumented students who risked deportation by coming out of the shadows, and with a new Governor in California, the Latino Caucus hopes to get this measure signed and provide hope to undocumented students in California. *Si Se Puede!*

BIRTH DEFECT QUESTIONS REMAIN IN KETTLEMAN CITY

State report finds no conclusive evidence of cause of birth defects

Kettleman City is a small, unincorporated town of 1,500 residents located in the southern Central Valley of California. Over a 3 year span between 2007 and 2010, 11 babies in Kettleman City were born with birth defects, including cleft lips, cleft palates, and heart maladies. Of those babies, 3 have subsequently passed away due to health complications.

In January 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger ordered the California Department of Public Health and Cal EPA to investigate what appeared to be a birth defect cluster. At the December 2010 Public Hearing in Kettleman City, in which the findings of the investigation were released, state officials declared that they found no conclusive evidence as to the cause of the birth defects.

Although no evidence was found as to the cause of the birth defects, environmental toxins prevalent in Kings County include high levels of naturally-occurring arsenic in the water, pesticide drift, diesel exhaust, and possible PCB exposure. These factors, coupled with the proximity of Waste Management's Kettleman Hills facility, the largest hazardous waste facility in the country, and questions of residents' access to health care, lead one to wonder when evidence will be found to ease resident's concerns.

The Latino Caucus will work to help get the community answers to their questions and will continue to help move the process to remediate the many effects of contamination forward.

Welcome Reception (January 4, 2011)



DID YOU KNOW?



On the west side of the California State Capitol, in front of the State Treasurer's Building and across from the California Peace Officers Memorial there is a unique veteran's memorial? What makes the memorial unique is that out of the 50 State Capitols, California is the only known state that has a veteran's memorial dedicated to the Mexican American/Latino veteran.

The memorial was built through private donations raised by a women's Mexican American Patriotic Society. While the memorial was initially dedicated to service members who served in World War II, it has since expanded to encompass and include all periods of armed conflict, starting with the admission of the state into the Union in 1860, through the present, including the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars.

It stood as a symbol of remembrance at a community center for 25 years until it was donated to the State and was relocated to its present site. The statue depicts a soldier at attention in a classic WW II uniform.

Next time you are touring the State Capitol visit the memorial and see a bit of California's living history. For more information on the **California Mexican American Veterans Memorial** visit the website at www.mavm.ca.gov.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 2011

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- Jan. 2 (Sun) Latino Caucus Birthday – ASM Michael Allen
- Jan. 4 (Tues) Latino Caucus Welcome Reception
- Jan. 12 (Wed) California Working Families Policy Summit 2011
- Jan. 12 (Wed) Meet & Greet with Colombian Labor Leader Javier Marrugo
- Jan. 17 (Mon) HOLIDAY: Martin Luther King Jr
- Jan. 24 (Mon) Latino Caucus Birthday – SEN Lou Correa
- Jan. 26 (Wed) Latino Caucus & Latino Health Alliance Policy Briefing
State Capitol, Room 112 from 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm

* For more information about upcoming events, please contact Armando Chavez at (916) 319-2056.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Website: <http://www2.legislature.ca.gov/latinocaucus/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=57405266134>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LatinoCaucus>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/latinocaucus> (@latinocaucus)
- Photo-Album: <http://picasaweb.google.com/CA.LatinoCaucus>

If you have any questions regarding the newsletter, please contact Armando Chavez at Armando.Chavez@asm.ca.gov